

APPLICATION 2005-M-3 LAND USE MAP AMENDMENT TO ADD AN AREA CURRENTLY LOCATED WEST OF THE CITY OF RENTON, IN UNINCORPORATED KING COUNTY, KNOWN AS “WEST HILL” TO THE CITY OF RENTON’S POTENTIAL ANNEXATION AREA.

OWNERS: VARIOUS

APPLICANT: CITY OF RENTON

DESCRIPTION

The proposal is to amend the Comprehensive Plan land use map to include land approximately 1,930 acres in size as part of Renton’s Potential Annexation Area (PAA). This area, known as “West Hill” (Exhibit ‘A’), is located west of the City of Renton in unincorporated King County.

ISSUE SUMMARY

Inclusion within the PAA does not affect service delivery or fiscal impacts on either Renton or the potential annexation area, so issues to be considered at this time only relate to the expansion of the PAA.

- The primary issue is whether all or a part of the West Hill, not currently within a municipal jurisdiction, should be within the City of Renton’s PAA. An approximately 14 acre portion of the West Hill immediately east of Rainier Blvd., at Lake Washington and the Renton city limits, is already included within Renton’s PAA.
- Inclusion in a PAA requires adoption of City Comprehensive Plan Land Use designations for the area. A comparison of the existing King County Land Use designations with current City designations and potential Renton zoning has been analyzed to ensure that the proposed Renton Comprehensive Plan designations are compatible with current land use. Renton zoning would not be applicable unless annexation takes place. The intent is to provide a translation of the County land use map into the City designations with negligible change in either density or allowed range of uses.
- Consistency with King County Countywide Planning Policies is also required.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The recommendation is to:

- Add West Hill within the boundaries indicated on the map included as Exhibit ‘A’ to the City of Renton Potential Annexation Area and
- Adopt Land Use Designations as part of the City of Renton Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map

BACKGROUND

Community Description

The Potential Annexation Area under consideration consists of long-established residential neighborhoods that have close ties to Renton. The neighborhoods include Earlington, Bryn Mawr, Lake Ridge, and Skyway. Collectively these neighborhoods are known as “West

Hill.” West Hill is an unincorporated “island” within the jurisdiction of King County between Seattle, Tukwila, and Renton. This area is primarily residential, but includes business areas along Renton Avenue South.

Current data about the West Hill was compiled in 2005, for the “West Hill Governance Alternatives Assessment Summary Report” by Berk & Associates (Exhibit ‘B’). In terms of demographics, West Hill and Renton are similar and compatible. West Hill is included in the Renton School District.

Berk and Associates characterizes West Hill as being functionally a part of the City of Renton due to its proximity to the center of Renton more than to other jurisdictions.



West Hill residents use Renton as their playground/entertainment and retail/business center.

Due to the fact that West Hill developed well after the City of Renton became established, Renton citizens used the resources of West Hill for both pleasure and commerce.

View of West Hill from Renton Hill

Photograph courtesy of the Museum of History and Industry

The following neighborhood sketches illustrate the many ways the West Hill neighborhoods have been connected to Renton through the years.

Earlington

In the late 1860s, the Renton pioneer Clymer family farmed at the foot of Earlington Hill. Mining for coal on the south side of the Hill, including the Clymer property, was attempted in the 1870s, but unlike the mines across the valley at Talbot and Renton Hills, ceased due to the poor quality of the material.

Farm on Earlington Hill



Photograph courtesy of the Renton Historical Society

Toward the turn of the century, Earlington Hill, which rose from the banks of the Black River and featured views of Mount Rainier and the fertile valley, attracted wealthy Seattleites who built vacation residences there.



Photograph courtesy of the Renton Historical Society

Later, these large estates were platted for development. The palatial Clarence Bagley home became the Earlington Country Club. The Earlington golf course, on the flats below the Hill, was one of the first in the state.

Bagley Mansion

The Earlington area saw development before other West Hill neighborhoods due to its close proximity to Renton and also because the only land access between Seattle and Renton was through Earlington by road, railroad, and via the Black River to Elliott Bay.

A portion of the Earlington neighborhood, from Langston Road south and from Beacon Coal Mine / Monster Road to the east, is within the current Renton corporate boundary.

Bryn Mawr

Bryn Mawr is located on the east side of the Hill, north of Earlington, and extends down to the edge of Lake Washington. Bryn Mawr, which means “brow of the hill” in Welsh, was probably home to coal miners working in Renton mines.

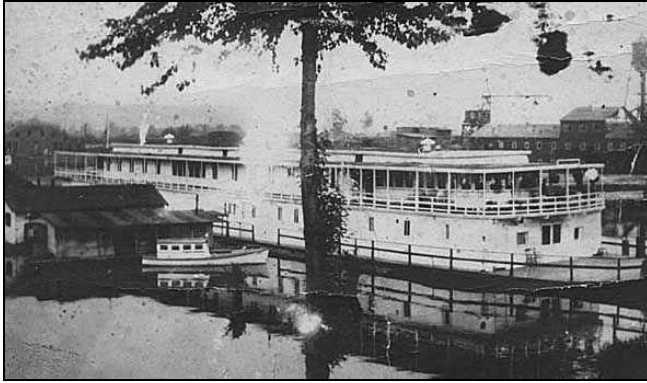
The heavily treed hills provided wood for the lumber and shingle mills that ringed the south end of Lake Washington north of early Renton.

In 1907, Bryn Mawr was characterized as a “pleasant town of country houses.”

Cabin in Bryn Mawr, ca. 1909



Photograph courtesy of the Museum of History and Industry



The lake and woods were popular with campers and hunters and excursion boats, like the “Bluebird” docked in Bryn Mawr and plied the waters of the lake.

The Bluebird at Bryn Mawr

Photograph courtesy of the Renton Historical Society

Following subdivision, in about 1890, early Bryn Mawr home sites were large enough to accommodate vegetable gardens and farm animals. This is reflected in the large legal lots remaining (although many underlying parcels were platted at 30 feet wide).

The westerly portion of Bryn Mawr was platted into five-acre tracts. Because of good drainage, fertile soil, and many artesian springs, several nurseries were located in Bryn Mawr throughout the twentieth century. One at the foot of West Hill abutted the Bryn Mawr airfield and with the airfield was incorporated into what was to become the Renton Municipal Airport.

Lake Ridge

Lake Ridge is also located on the east side of the Hill, between Bryn Mawr and Rainier Beach to the north. It was developed later than the other areas due to inaccessibility by land until a road was completed between Seattle and Renton in 1917. In the late 1920s Lake Ridge was designed with curving roads (so that all home sites had views of both lake and distant hills) and strict covenants (minimum house value of the extraordinary sum, for the time, of \$2,500.) to ensure that development was of a high quality. Only a few homes were built, however, before the stock market crash and depression brought a temporary end to real estate investment and home building. Development of Lake Ridge did not resume to a significant degree until the 1940s. Unlike other West Hill neighborhoods, Lake Ridge has never had a commercial area and has largely relied on Renton as its business center. First Bryn Mawr and then Lake Ridge have been areas of choice for people who own businesses and work in Renton.

Skyway

Skyway was the last of the West Hill neighborhoods to see development of the early farms and ranches. In the early 1930s, a county road, Renton Avenue, was constructed as a “short cut” from Seattle and to reduce the volume of traffic on Rainier Avenue. The construction of houses in Skyway coincided with the manufacture of “Defense Worker” housing associated with war armament production at Boeing and Pacific Car and Foundry in Renton. Both sides of Renton Avenue were developed with small houses on small lots and a lively business district grew at the top of the Hill. Businesses were started by veterans returning to the area after the War, some businesses expanded from Renton, opening branches in Skyway, and some moved to Renton, as they grew too large for the Skyway market area. Many houses and

commercial buildings from this period remain today. The Skyway Library Board, sponsored by the Skyway Community Club, and the Skyway VFW were responsible for two of the most significant amenities in the neighborhood, the Skyway Library and Skyway Park respectively, although these were later taken over by King County.

Governance and Fiscal Background

The City of Renton's initial GMA Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1993, included the West Hill within the Renton Potential Annexation area. The Comprehensive Plan Environmental Analysis prepared for the 1993 Plan also included the West Hill. In 1998, Renton City Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan Amendment removing the West Hill from the PAA due to uncertainty about the fiscal implications of a possible future annexation. At the time, the City had preliminary cost of service data about the East Renton and Fairwood/Cascade PAAs, but did not have sufficient information about the West Hill to continue the policy of planning for future urban services to the area.

In June 2005, however, as a result of the King County Annexation Initiative, King County established the West Hill Governance Alternatives Task Force to provide citizen input and community dialogue about annexation through the King County Community Council structure. The Task Force issued the West Hill Governance Report (referenced above, Exhibit 'B'). This study looked at the pros and cons of the following alternatives for West Hill:

- Remain an incorporated area in King County,
- Incorporate as a new city;
- Annex to Seattle, or
- Annex to Renton

Although annexation to Tukwila would be possible, the City of Tukwila has indicated an unwillingness to annex the area, so this alternative was not included in the study.

The City of Renton subsequently contracted with the same consultants to analyze the impacts on the City of Renton of a possible annexation of West Hill. The "Assessment of the Fiscal Impact of Annexation of West Hill," September 2005 (Exhibit 'C'), studied the impacts of annexation of areas or combination of areas. With more information now known, it is appropriate to reconsider the earlier removal and potentially reinstate the West Hill area into Renton's PAA.

The West Hill Governance Alternative Task Force voted on September 28th to support annexation of the entire community to Renton. This position will be presented to the community October 18th, and it is anticipated that a formal request for annexation will follow.

The West Hill Fiscal Impact study found that if the City of Renton were governing the West Hill in 2005, and maintained current levels of taxes and services, the gap between additional costs and revenues would be \$2.4 million dollars. The study evaluated both complete and partial annexation looking at three areas within the proposed PAA. These areas include:

- Area 1, contiguous to the existing city limit, population 4,388 with net revenue of \$430,000, location of one fire station

- Area 2, also contiguous to the existing city limit, population 7,217, net revenue 2.3 million
- Area 3, non-contiguous population 2,310, net revenue \$251,000, location of a second fire station.

The study concluded that annexation of all three areas would cost the city \$2.4 million, but that annexation of Areas 1 and 3 alone might have a net cost of \$3.1 million. If Renton were to annex only Areas 1 and 2, but not Area 3 the logistical difficulties of fire protection would be pronounced due to the location of existing fire stations. If Area 1 only were annexed, the existing fire station would likely be closed and service provided would be from existing Renton facilities. If Areas 1 and 3 (with greatest proximity to the exiting city limits) were annexed, the incremental cost of adding Area 2 was not substantial due to incremental cost in police staffing, and the overall fiscal benefit greater than would occur if Areas 2 were excluded.

Land Use Background

The King County Comprehensive Plan Map (Exhibit 'D') indicates there are three types of land uses in the West Hill area. They are residential, commercial, and industrial. The primary land use designation on West Hill is Urban Residential, with both medium density (4 to 12 dwelling units/acre) and high density (greater than 12 du/ac). An area south of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (MLK) is designated Industrial. Two existing commercial areas are designated as "Community Business." Three small commercial areas on Beacon Avenue, Rainier Ave, and MLK have the designation of "Commercial Outside of Centers."

The Urban Residential areas are zoned by King County at densities of six, eight, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, and forty-eight dwelling units per acre (Exhibit 'D'). The commercial areas are zoned either Community Business or Neighborhood Business for the large or small areas, respectively.

ANALYSIS

The proposed Renton land use plan for the West Hill is shown in Exhibit 'E'. This map was prepared based on consideration of equivalent land use both in respect to density and the range of allowed uses. The intent is to translate the County land use designations into the City equivalents with negligible change in either density or allowed range of uses.

The West Hill had a 2000 population of 13,977 people and has 5,780 housing units of which 72 percent are single family. Homeownership was approximately 67 percent in 2000. Median household income was \$47,385 in 2000, with 5,579 households. Based on Buildable Land data for 2002, the West Hill has an estimated future capacity of 1,913 units, assuming 167 developable acres. An estimate of employment capacity has not been generated by King County at this time. A summary of demographic, employment, housing, and income characteristics of the West Hill is included in an excerpt from the 2003 King County Growth Report, titled "West Hill Potential Annexation Area" and included herewith as Exhibit 'F'.

The Renton land use designations and implementing zoning use net density calculations rather than gross density. As a general rule Renton net density numbers are 20 percent higher than

their gross density counterparts. The proposed Renton designations compared with King County designations are summarized below, and presented in greater detail on Exhibit 'G'.

- Residential Single Family with R-8 zoning corresponding to County Urban Residential 4-12 with R-6 zoning
- Residential Medium Density with either R-10 (7-10 du/net ac) or R-14 (7-18 du/net ac) zoning corresponding to County Urban Residential 4-12 with R-8 and R-12 zoning
- Residential Multi-family with RM-F zoning (7-20 du/net ac) corresponding to County Urban residential greater than 12 du/ac with R-18 zoning
- Center Village with CV zoning (25-75 du/net ac) corresponding to portions of County Urban Residential greater than 12 du/ac with R-24 and R-48 zoning.
- Commercial Neighborhood corresponding to Neighborhood Business
- Commercial Corridor corresponding to County Community Business
- Industrial Medium corresponding to County Industrial.

The proposed land use plan achieves the same overall land use capacity and range of uses for the West Hill as currently allowed under County comprehensive planning and zoning. The major difference between the land use plans with respect to uses is that the County approach allows both single family and multi-family/townhouse development in all residential areas, whereas the City's approach excludes multi-family/townhouse development in the Single Family designation, and excludes single family detached uses in the multi-family and mixed use commercial designations. While unit type and style differ, the overall number of units allowed is comparable. It is the intention of the City to subsequently prepare more detailed land use analysis and possibly a West Hill sub-area plan with community involvement upon future annexation.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The following Renton Comprehensive Plan objectives and policies are the most relevant:

Objective LU-A: Plan for future urban development in the Renton Urban Growth Area (UGA) including the existing City and the unincorporated areas identified in Renton's Potential Annexation Areas (PAA).

Policy LU-2: Designate Potential Annexation Areas (PAAs) as those portions of unincorporated King County outside the existing City limits, but within the Urban Growth Area, where:

- 1) Renton can logically provide urban services over the planning period;
- 2) Land use patterns support implementation of Renton's Urban Center objectives;
and,

- 3) *Development meets overall standards for quality identified for city neighborhoods.
[If annexed, new development would be required to meet City standards]*

In addition, the following King County Countywide Planning Policy is applicable:

LU-31: *In collaboration with adjacent counties and cities and King County, and in consultation with residential groups in affected areas, each city shall designate a potential annexation area. Each potential annexation area shall be specific to each city. Potential annexation areas shall not overlap. Within the potential annexation area the city shall adopt criteria for annexation, including conformance with Countywide Planning Policies, and a schedule for providing urban services and facilities within the potential annexation area. This process shall ensure that unincorporated urban islands of King County are not created between cities and strive to eliminate existing islands between cities.*

AMENDMENT REVIEW CRITERIA

RMC 4-9-020, Comprehensive Plan Adoption and Amendment Process requires that a proposal demonstrate that the requested amendment is timely and meets at least one of the following:

Review Criteria for Comprehensive Plan Amendments:

- 1. The request supports the vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan, or*
- 2. The request supports the adopted business plan goals established by the City Council, or*
- 3. The request eliminates conflicts with existing elements or policies, or*
- 4. The request amends the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate new policy directives of the City Council.*

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment to add the West Hill to Renton's Potential Annexation Area meets one through three of the Review Criteria.

ZONING CONCURRENCY

A concurrent rezone is not required. Zoning would be determined at the time of future annexation.

CONCLUSION

The addition of the West Hill to Renton's PAA is consistent with City and County objectives and policies. Therefore, the recommendation is that a map amendment be approved.